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# THE COMPANY OF ROYAL ADVENTURERS OF ENGLAND TRADING INTO AFRICA, 1660-1672

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## INTRODUCTION

The English commercial companies trading to the west coast of Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have practically escaped the attention of historical students. Doubtless this neglect is the result of the little importance which has until recently been attached to African territory since the abolition of the slave trade. Previous to that time the west coast of Africa vied with the East Indies for popular attention, and the English African companies often appeared to be but little less important than the great East India Company.

The cause for the popular esteem of the African coast during the earlier centuries was the intimate connection which the slave trade had with the development of the English plantations in the West Indies. About the middle of the seventeenth century the growing of sugar cane and other products in the West Indies began to open up enormous possibilities which, it was universally agreed, could be realized only by the extensive use of Negro slaves. At the restoration of Charles II in 1660 the English commercial class directly supported and assisted by the king's courtiers determined to secure as large a portion of the West African coast as possible. To reach this end they organized that year The Company of the Royal Adventurers into Africa. This decision at once brought the company into conflict with the Dutch West India Company, which, during the twenty years of domestic trouble in England, had all but monopolized the desirable portion of the West African coast.

It happened therefore that the Company of Royal Adventurers played a very important part in the events which led up to the Anglo-Dutch war of 1665-67. The war resulted in the financial ruin of the company which was in existence only about eleven years, at the end of which time it was succeeded by the much larger and better organized Royal African Company.

It has seemed to the author as if the English African companies were a very profitable field of historical investigation. Therefore, the present dissertation on the Company of Royal Adventurers will be followed shortly by a history of the Royal African Company, 1672-1752.

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